
2002 USDA Forest Service Engineering Special Recognition Award

In addition to the annual USDA Forest Service Engineer of the Year awards, for exemplary performance an unprecedented USDA Forest Service Engineering Special Recognition Award was presented to Raleigh Meadows by Washington Office Director of Engineering Vaughn Stokes on April 24, 2003, in Hot Springs, AR.



Raleigh, who is the forest engineer and lands team leader for the Ouachita National Forest, Region 8, in Hot Springs, AR, was recognized for his significant contributions to the USDA Forest Service engineering program during his 41 years in public service. According to the USDA Forest Service Regional Director of Engineering for Region 8, George Kulick, "Raleigh is in a class by himself, in terms of the knowledge, wisdom, and wealth of experience that he brings to the job."

Raleigh first worked as a USDA Forest Service employee in 1961 on the Cherokee National Forest in Tennessee. There he was responsible for constructing the Jacobs Creek Job Corps Center. He moved to Alabama to become a forest engineer in 1969. In 1972, he began his work with the Ouachita National Forest in Arkansas. Raleigh has the distinction of serving as a forest engineer longer than anyone in the history of the USDA Forest Service—33 years. He also holds the longest tenure as a forest engineer on the same forest. He has worked for 10 forest supervisors and has collaborated with 9 of the 11 Region 8 forest engineers.

With a career in the USDA Forest Service spanning 5 decades, Raleigh has witnessed a world of change in the engineering field. The slide rule used by engineers during the beginning of his career has been replaced by technology such as global positioning, electronic distance meters, and computer-aided design (CADD). Raleigh not only adapted to these technological advances but led the Ouachita team in developing a technologically advanced system of water treatment using a mixed-oxidant disinfection system as well as a process for using solar power in a remote recreation area.

Since working at the Ouachita National Forest, Raleigh has overseen the construction of more than 2,000 miles of road within the forest. He established the purchaser credit program, which centralizes the maintenance of more than 5,500 miles of road within the Ouachita National Forest. He oversees the maintenance of more than 400 buildings, 20 dams, and 10 water systems. He also manages one of the largest land exchange programs in the region, as well as the only commercial quartz-mining program.

He is currently working with a rural development commission to restore a historic former Girl Scout camp constructed by the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression.

Raleigh managed the initial response, investigation, and cleanup after a record flood and major ice storm. One of his engineers received the Secretary of Agriculture Honor Award for his quick action in getting the forest roads open following the storm.

Raleigh has also managed atypical projects such as the acquisition, development, and exchange of a residential Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC) camp. He has overseen the completion of two Intermodal Surface Transport Efficiency Act (ISTEA) projects by coordinating with the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration and the State Highway Department. He worked with local water utilities to connect three major recreation areas to city water to ensure them safe and adequate drinking water, while reducing overall long-term maintenance costs to the forest.

Achievements in the USDA Forest Service have not stopped Raleigh from making contributions to the local community. He has been active in a family business that finds jobs for the local unemployed and for many years has coached baseball at the local Boys Club. He and his wife of 41 years have three grown children.

"Raleigh has been innovative and has adjusted with the times, yet has maintained his philosophy of honesty, sound engineering, and giving full support to the workers he manages," said Kulick. "He is an invaluable part of the Ouachita, the largest national forest in the region."